

EXPRESS DOSSIER ON BRITAIN'S RUNDOWN

Our defences

B RITAIN'S national defences have never been so weak since the dark days of 1939. Relentlessly our world-wide Forces have been pulled back to Europe with the repudiation of one solemn foreign commitment after another.

At the same time, the military threat has never been greater and is increasing daily as the Russians and their Warsaw Pact allies build up armaments in every sphere.

The rot set in when the Tory Government abolished conscription in 1962, which is why that date has been chosen for comparison with today.

It was assumed then that successive Governments would find the money to provide a smaller but more professional Navy, Army and Air Force with such firepower and expertise that it would have greater fighting ability than before.

PRESSURE

In the end, while Forces manpower has been whittled down from 483,200 to 329,124, the supply of weapons, planes, ships and equipment has

By Chapman
Pincher

diminished following relentless Left-wing pressure to cut defence spending to provide money for social services.

Nearly 800 Chieftain tanks may sound a lot but that number of battle-tanks was eliminated on tiny fronts in a few days of the last Arab-Israeli war.

The RAF is still waiting for the Tornado combat plane due to replace the TSR2 bomber which Labour cancelled 12 years ago.

The Navy has been cut to a largely coastal force with only 188 warships compared with 470 in 1962.

The Forces both at home and in Germany are under-

gunned and undertanked. They are short of support aircraft and protection against air attack.

In the South-East of England there are a few ancient Bloodhound anti-aircraft missiles while in Scotland there is one squadron of low-level Rapier missiles. That is all.

MEAGRE

Until the new Tornado planes arrive in the 'eighties the R.A.F.'s fighter and bomber strength is meagre in the extreme its aircraft being so old that they are out of production.

Deliveries of weapons and equipment which have

survived cancellation have been delayed to spread the costs. Stockpiles of bombs, shells, and other essential weapons have been cut to save money.

Yet there is a crucial difference between preparedness now and in the past. Since tactical nuclear weapons would almost certainly be used if a major war lasted more than a few weeks, Britain would have to fight with what it had when the conflict started. There would be no time to gear up industry to produce more arms as in the last war.

The potential strength of the nation's industry is no longer a plus, which is why cuts in immediate combat strength, like those which

Labour continues to demand, terrify the Staff Chiefs.

In 1962 there was still a sizeable Civil Defence Corps—once 250,000 strong—but this was abandoned in 1968 after the Treasury seized on the belief—then current but since revised—that Britain could not be defended anyway.

The Russians, on the other hand, have spent huge sums on elaborate air raid precautions in their major cities.

ARROGANCE

For these and other reasons the threat has become more real and more dangerous as the balance of military power has shifted ever more decisively in the Kremlin's favour.

Currently the threat is not being expressed as any projected invasion of Western Europe but as the political pressure which confidence in massive armed superiority inevitably generates.

It has been seen in the brutal arrogance with which the Kremlin ordered its Cuban mercenaries into Angola and into Ethiopia, sensing that the Western response would be purely verbal.

It was seen in the recent coup in Afghanistan which established a pro-Soviet regime hostile to Iran, the West's main ally in the Middle East.

It is being seen now, in the Communist support being given to the rebels in Zaire.

It is likely to be seen in the pressures which the Kremlin will exert on Yugoslavia when Tito dies.

Intelligence reports show conclusively that the Russians now have more than enough arms for political pressure purposes.

So the continuing expansion

of their offensive capabilities, including a fleet of 30 marines, can hardly be any other object than a sion somewhere one day.

The disposition of Soviet forces shows Europe rather than China as the main potential target.

In any attack on Europe Britain would be heavily involved from the start—out American assistance could not withstand a sian assault with tanks and aircraft. An U.S. can reinforce effect from the homeland on Britain.

So with Russia as the enemy, the elimination of Britain as a reinforcement base would be a major objective.

Meanwhile, the Russians have a further military advantage over Britain being able to pay their troops much lower rates and recruit them to put up with harsh conditions.

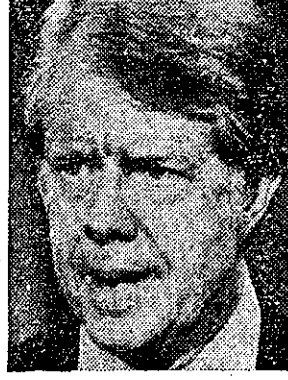
This means that 75 per



AFTER WINNING the hearts of Berliners when she pledged Britain to defend the divided city's freedom, the Queen inspected a parade (above) of more than 1,100 British troops at West Berlin's Mafeld Stadium to mark her official birthday. In the enormous stadium—where Hitler used to hold the mass rallies characteristic of his régime—the Queen and 30,000 German, British and American spectators watched this magnificent show of strength and cheered as the Welsh Guards and paratroopers trooped their colours before 12 tanks fired a 21-gun salute.

NATO troops 'couldn't stop

by ROSS MARK in Washington



All eyes on Carter

BRITAIN'S 60,000-man Army on the Rhine, out-gunned and overwhelmed in a Red Army blitz, is pictured in a secret report on President Carter's desk.

The spectre of a new Dunkirk comes in chilling assessments of the shifting balance of power in favour of the Warsaw Pact nations as the leaders of NATO prepare for their Washington Summit on May 30 and 31.

In his classified 10-page memorandum to Mr Carter, Secretary of Defence Harold Brown declares: "We must make sure that NATO is not overwhelmed even before the

first convoys from the United States arrive."

The relative weakness of British, German and Belgian forces defending the North German Plain invite a Russian onslaught, strategic experts of the Pentagon, C.I.A. and Congressional Defence Committees agree.

Compared with 53 artillery pieces, tanks and anti-tank weapons per 1,000 men in an American armoured division, similar British units have only 27, West Germany's 28, and Belgium's less.

America is now promising to double its units in Europe within two weeks of word of Warsaw Pact mobilisation.

Mr Brown has told the President that in his second NATO Summit—the first was in London last May—he must give the blunt warning: "There will be no time to assemble forces."

The message for the world, informed White House sources say, is that Mr Carter is now committed to a fundamental shift in American policy to convince the Kremlin that its

shoving and pushing Europe, Africa and the Middle East means a showdown.

America's Commander NATO forces, General Alexander Haig, is resigning because he believes his wings flashed to Washington the Warsaw Pact's mobilisation have been ignored.

But now an anxious White House is accepting General Haig's estimates of proffered Red Forces on ground: 23,100 tanks v NATO's 6,200; 31,200 armoured troop carriers to NATO's 14,600; 5,570 heavy artillery pieces to NATO's 2,320; self-propelled anti-air missiles to NATO's 200.

In addition the CIA

Total	
483,200*	
R.N.	
96,600	
ARMY	
236,500	
R.A.F.	
150,100	
1962	
* Includes 31,200 National Service	
Total	
329,124	
R.N.	
75,637	
ARMY	
168,621	
R.A.F.	
84,866	
1978	

Vanishing service